

## REGION 6 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOPIC: Memorandum of Understanding with Bureau of Land Management for Legacy Uranium Mines

DATE: August 30, 2011

CONTACT: Lisa Marie Price

PURPOSE/ACTION NEEDED: Signature of Regional Administrator

DEADLINE DATE: As soon as possible

### BACKGROUND:

The Grants Mining District (GMD) located in the northwestern New Mexico was the major historic uranium-producing region and affects over 320 square miles of the San Mateo Creek Watershed. *Assessment of Health and Environmental Impacts of Uranium Mining and Milling Five-Year Plan, August 2010* was developed with federal and state partners to coordinate the investigation and cleanup of legacy uranium environmental impacts and the protection of human health. The Plan identifies 97 legacy uranium mines are located with the GMD on federal, state, and/or privately-owned properties as possible sources of contamination. The EPA is conducting screening level investigations at each of the mines and has determined that 27 of the legacy uranium mines are located on property where the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the land manager and/or holds the mineral estate.

### CURRENT STATUS:

The EPA and the BLM jointly developed a Memorandum of Understanding which speaks to coordination and prioritization of mine work, assigns responsibilities for the mines to BLM or EPA based on land and/or mineral estate trust responsibilities, and establishes a protocol for sharing information. The New Mexico State Director for the BLM has signed the document.

### ENVIRONMENTAL/PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS:

Residents in the GMD have expressed concern about the environmental and human health impacts from uranium mining and milling for decades. With the Memorandum of Understanding in place, the EPA and the BLM can coordinate and prioritize investigations and actions to better understand those impacts and mitigate those impacts.

### TECHNICAL CONCERNS:

- Very limited information regarding pre-mining and milling ground water conditions exist making it difficult to know what contamination is naturally-occurring from anthropogenic impacts.

### REGULATORY/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:

- The BLM has been delegated CERCLA authority for properties where the BLM is the federal land manager

### COMMUNITY CONCERNS:

- Grants, New Mexico is one of the Region 6 EJ Areas of Concern.
- Consultations with Pueblo Laguna and Acoma are ongoing.



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### RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Superfund Division recommends that the Regional Administrator sign the Memorandum of Understanding with Bureau of Land Management for Legacy Uranium Mines.



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